

What is claimed is:

1. A method for creating a coating blanket for use in a printing press, comprising the steps of:

providing sheet-type work material having a laminated construction wherein a layer of flexible material is coupled to a carrier layer of semi-rigid material;

providing a cutting apparatus having a cutting surface, drive means for moving said work material relative to said cutting surface in response to command signals generated by a controller coupled to said cutting apparatus, a cutter head positioned adjacent to said cutting surface for movement thereacross in response to said command signals, a cutting blade coupled to said cutter head, said cutting blade being positionable, via said cutter head, between a non-working position wherein the cutting blade is located adjacent said work material, and a working position wherein said cutting blade engages said work material;

programming said controller with graphic cutting data and carrier layer cutting data;

presenting said coating blanket material to said cutting apparatus such that said carrier layer engages said cutting surface;

causing said drive means to move said coating blanket material back and forth over said cutting surface in response to said command signals issued from said controller;

moving said cutter head, responsive to said graphic cutting data relative to said cutting surface, and said cutting blade between said non-working and working positions to selectively cut through portions of said flexible layer in a single pass during a cutting operation;

causing said blade to engage said carrier layer and make multiple cutting passes along lines of cut defined by command signals issued from said controller in accordance with said carrier layer cutting data, thereby selectively cutting through portions of said carrier layer; and

removing said coating blanket material from said cutting apparatus; separating a coating blanket from said coating blanket material along said lines of cut extending through said carrier layer.

2. A method for making a coating blanket as defined by claim 1, wherein prior to said step of moving said cutter head, responsive to said graphic cutting data relative to said cutting surface, and said cutting blade between said non-working and working positions, said method includes the further step of:

5 moving said blade in accordance with command signals issued from said controller such that a tip portion thereof touches a reference surface located on said cutting apparatus;

sensing the location of said tip portion and thereby said blade upon touching said reference surface;

10 storing the sensed location of said cutting blade and tip portion relative to said reference surface, in said controller; and wherein during said step of moving said cutting blade between said non-working and working positions, said method includes the further step of

15 adjusting an amount by which said tip portion of said cutting blade extends into said work material in accordance with said sensed location.

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3. A method for creating a coating blanket as defined by claim 1, wherein:

said cutting apparatus further includes a frame and said cutting surface is defined by a roller coupled for rotation to said frame, said cutter head being movable along a longitudinal direction defined by said roller in response to said command signals issued from said controller; and wherein said step of causing said blade to engage said carrier layer further includes

creating via multiple passes of said cutting blade, and in accordance with said carrier sheet cutting data, a plurality of first spaced apart slits extending through said carrier layer along a first pair of opposing edges which in part define the periphery of said coating blanket, said first pair of opposing edges being approximately perpendicular to a longitudinal axis defined by said roller; and

creating via multiple passes of said cutting blade, and in accordance with said carrier sheet cutting data, a plurality of second spaced apart slits extending through said carrier layer along a second pair of spaced apart opposing edges approximately parallel to said longitudinal axis and approximately perpendicular to said first pair of opposing edges, said first and second pairs of opposing edges together defining the periphery of said coating blanket; and whereby

said second spaced apart slits allow said work material to overhang said roller as it is advanced thereover without the semi-rigid nature of the carrier layer causing said coating blanket to separate from said work material.

4. A method for creating a coating blanket as defined by claim 1, wherein during said steps of moving said cutting blade between said non-working and working positions to selectively cut through portions of said flexible layer, and causing said blade to engage said carrier layer and make multiple cutting passes along lines of cut defined by command signals issued from said controller in accordance with said carrier layer cutting data, thereby selectively cutting through portions of said carrier layer, said method includes the further steps of:

sensing the amount of pressure exerted by said cutting blade in a direction approximately normal to said work material; and

adjusting said pressure to cut through said flexible layer in a single pass, and into said carrier layer a desired amount on each of said multiple cutting passes.

5. A method for creating a coating blanket as defined by claim 3, wherein said first pair of opposed edges each defining areal portions of said carrier sheet positioned between successive slits, and wherein said step of creating via multiple passes of said cutting blade, and in accordance with said carrier sheet cutting data, a plurality of second spaced apart slits further includes scoring said areal portions via multiple passes of said cutting blade in accordance with said carrier sheet cutting data.

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